

Lean Days for "Saviors of Our Country"

By H. R. PINCI

ARCHEOLOGISTS who have reconstructed on paper some of the ancient palaces that once adorned the Nile country believe that these contained, among other ingenious improvements, an echo chamber—a self-phonographic sort of room where all self-invited callers were obliged to tarry a while before being permitted to go farther. On the theory that murder will out, so in apparent solitude a man's conscience will think—aloud. This fiendishly clever discovery about man's weakness brought about the isolation from the rest of mankind of the patriots, whose breed has been prolific ever since.

While cooling their heels, therefore, on the stone floors, those unsolicited visitors yielded to the subtly compelling temptation of rehearsing their part and speech, as do all mere mortals who expect to be ushered before the great and the near great. As on occasions these thoughts were more loud than wise, and faithful acoustics did the rest, interested families went down to the nearest quarry and ordered another obit sculpted.

Cleopatra, who did everything in the open, if we are to believe the pictures of her we see, tested her visitors by means of this whispering gallery, and thus the royal ear heard in advance if it was a lover with a couple of tickets for the dahabeah excursion or just a patriot who wanted an ambassadorship to Rome. By means of scientific architecture, therefore, Cleopatra had the advantage on Harding's human secretaries just as Thothmes III had it on Cleveland's telephonic intelligence.

Cleopatra's Bulge on Callers

HOLDING up the executive's hands was a fashion in vogue in the days of Cleo and Thoth and not discovered by the Democrats in 1919, and to prove this the student is referred to the pictorial incisions on ancient monuments. Nowadays only a few exotic dancers have succeeded in bending the wrists at right angles without dislocating the bones. Certainly no President could ever hold up his own hands that way without help—hence the rush of help.

Despite some very efficient inquisitorial activities on the part of those who surround him, no President may protect himself from the patriot's persistence, although the latter as a class is responsible for some of the best golf scores by a few Presidents, because every time Taft, Wilson and Harding made a long drive is when they thought that the dull thud was the impact of the club against a patriot's dome.

There is a great difference between the patriot and the citizen. It would be an injustice to confuse one with the other. Let the former have all the credit—even though his hunt is for cash.

The citizen is that nobody who does his bit and pays taxes and honestly believes all campaign literature, while the patriot, having nothing to pay taxes on, always discovers infallible remedies for saving the country. The citizen stays at home and very likely has never seen a President in the flesh. The patriot, instead, goes to Washington whenever he can, and his mission in life is to call on the President himself.

His great ambition, though, is to save the country. The only way is by means of a job. But a job, of course, does not necessarily mean a chance to work. Working and saving the country are two different things, and the patriot alone believes that one means the other.

As every well-regulated family sooner or later finds a patriot in its midst, with the chances much greater now that the females have been added to the males, it would be a touchy subject to speak about them, but the very abundance and thorough distribution of patriots per American family by either year or generation provides that anonymity which goes with collectiveness.

Of course, not all potential patriots can translate their ideals and lofty purposes into action, and therefore nine out of every ten are predestined to suffer silently in obscure places, like genius unrecognized, and to pass their years engaged in some prosaic vocation instead of earning a future bronze statue by way of Washington. As it is impossible to do away with every tenth adult inhabitant, there is no way of eliminating the patriot. Even being jobless does not faze him, and it seems as if his is the only human species that can thrive during the high cost of living without working. A hardy stonecutter or spikedriver or longshoreman would kick the bucket in no time after a few payless Saturdays, but the most delicate, fastidious, hot-house patriot can wrestle with old H. C. L. and count it out at first blow.

Real Saviors Suffer

A FEW years ago the spoils system, despite the anti-patriot Civil Service Commission, provided an outlet for the exuberant industry of patriots who save the country as ushers and thus keep out desirables and traitors and what not in lieu of a place as assistant secretary.

The war, however, raised a disturbance in civil service circles, so that even today Congress is attempting to restore order, but in the meantime the old-fashioned patriot who hung around until his congressman fixed him up, content to accept a hundred real simoleons per every thirty days has become extinct like the dinosaurs. In his stead there is the fervent patriot who has become a sort of dollar-a-year man, but this privately, unable to finance himself in Washington, will draw anything at all by way of "nominal expenses."

Thus there came before the country a class of government workers of class one or possibly class four who, instead of being God-fearing, honest-to-goodness clerks in the Federal employ, labeled themselves fellows who came down during the emergency, "the war, you know," and were not salaried like the rest of the common run of humanity, but on an "allowance." As far as known, they are still working for the sovereign

people of the United States for nothing, except possibly a dollar a year, the rest of the per annum total being maintenance by a good old uncle.

Naturally this gave the advantage to those who came to Washington with one fell swoop, as the saying goes, to do some saving while the saving was good. But it left the others at a distinct disadvantage.

Needless to say, those mostly sinned against in this respect since the end of the war have been the real saviors of the country; the soldiers and the sailors and all the others who dealt face to face with a very real and destructive menace.

Not a few of these men would welcome a job, and do the best they could at it, but to be taken for better or worse, because they need the money. But having used up most of their strength and energy and even health in looking for the enemy, they are unequal now to the task of looking for a job except by implication. Moreover, the patriots are pretty active and they wag a sarcastic tongue, with the result that the easiest roads to a government job are now obstructed by those with a mission.

A few years ago the patriotizing hopefuls could be singled out by a distinctive sort of habiliment, one of those phenomena that just happen. Due probably to the fact that the outsiders looking in were from the South, where they observed all the proprieties, Washington's streets and public places where no entrance fee was required, were noted for the countless men in frock coats at least two sizes too great, black fedoras, that somehow one has since connected with the West, creaseless pants modeled after those of Robert E. Lee, the effect embellished by a white-lawn string tie, unless the owner happened to be a fiery patriot who ate 'em alive and proclaimed so with a red necktie.

This year the effect is different. There is no distinguishing characteristic sartorially; they are blurred against the rest of humanity by the few national tailors who are responsible for some of the alleged styles, whose nobby lines clothe and conceal the angular lines of an unoffending bookkeeper with the same precision that they straighten the fronts of wealthier stouts. Thus the straight-front no longer alludes solely to milady's intimate garment.

Moreover, the poor man's club in ante-prohibition days was a lodestar and between Fourth-and-a-half and Seventh streets and Tenth and Fifteenth streets on Pennsylvania Avenue could be found any number of patriots waiting anxiously, and the untutored might have been led to believe that their nervousness was due to terrible responsibilities, which were easily set aside whenever a good sport came in.

Again—who said the South was not fortune's own stamping ground?—when it was the South's turn to be outside looking in, Washingtonianly speaking, railroad fares were very low and a skillful patriot could always talk his favorite railroad into a pass—for they were the days!

Heartrending Scenes

TODAY, so destiny has willed it, with the North wishing to look in, railroad fares are sky-high and the hardest of patriots hesitates before resigning himself to the uncertainties of an uncertain reception. A bottle of ginger ale or near-beer does not carry with it the service table of plentitude of yesteryear, with sausage, roast beef, chipped onion, sardines, mustard, cheese, crackers, olives, radishes, and then all over again. Patriotizing today is an expensive pastime, and even if one be fortunate enough to connect up reasonably soon, the prospective salary is not rebounding—and cannot take care of experimental incidentals.

The cost of high living, for the patriot, has been met by a corresponding sense of selectiveness of his part. Everything being higher means nothing; his services in saving the country are available at a higher figure. Thus the ordinary rock-ribbed sure-meal clerkship he disdains, at least at the present writing, and he is perfectly willing to let Uncle Sam do without him for a few days until something like his figure can be agreed on. Statistics mean something in his case, and the mere fact that the United States is supposed to be a nation worth in the altogether the bagatelle of \$475,000,000,000 makes it only the more imperative that it be saved, or safeguarded, or protected, for a gentleman's salary, and not a sou marque less.

"Why," they say nonchalantly, as though each had learned the words and gestures at one school of elocution, "a corkscrew factory would pay more for a twister!"

"Well," says the tired young man who distributes the application blanks at the Civil Service Commission offices, after explaining the conditions of the forthcoming examination for chiropodist at the zoo, "we all know that the government does not pay very liberally."

Then follows an almost heartrending scene. Another patriot unexpectedly enters the room, and two hearts with a single beat, two souls with but a single thought, two "tummies" with a single hunger, two pocketbooks with a single (and last) dollar, meet. The two patriots face each other, sheepishly for the briefest instant, but who could read their secret except the fellow behind the desk who hears the fairy tales eight hours a day?

"John, back home," says the first with equanimity, as he looks superciliously at the blank in his hand, as he fingers it ostentatiously in and out of the envelope, "has just written to me about this job of paring the elephant's corns, and since he has been a corn expert all his life he thought it might do. So I came down to investigate. Maybe I can do something for him."

"Odd," smiles the other, as he moves a step nearer

the railing, with the evident intention of getting himself a blank, too, "but our cook's husband S O S'd me to the same effect."

But to understand the patriot, and to know how to trail him, it is perhaps well to engage in a personally conducted tour and shadow him carefully. He has a way all his own. He is not like the other fellows who go to Washington on business—even the very difficult business of getting a job and advertising that fact to the world, or as much as there is of it in that city. The patriot in his patriotizing days, which are those when he puts up a bold front, all dolled up, with lots of places to go but none to remain, is a reincarnate swashbuckler. D'Artagnan was a tyro at getting his first job even if he bluffed others into giving him one, but if he had happened along three hundred years after 1620 he would have had to do it all over again. His sword and his plume and his nag and his paw's benediction—pooh, says the new patriot!

At the White House Gate

THE Succotash Bugle, in its Saturday morning extra, carries an item something like this from Washington, undated:

"After a series of conferences lasting several days, the President let it be known that the situation is extremely delicate and will require careful investigation. So far no plan has been suggested."

That ends it. As soon as a patriot sees, then, it's all over. Washington for him? Better than that—W. Gamaliel shall know that an original Harding man is on his way, with all kinds of plans. Why pay \$120,000 a year to ten cabinet officials when he can do it for one-twentieth?

The prolog may be very sad. A movie director could make it the original fount of tears, because where is the gink who wouldn't weep to see a movie of a man hocking his watch, or seeing a "good" friend touched for the price of railroad fare, and where is the jane who wouldn't gulp to see the hero leave his habitat, with everybody speeding the parting guest with fingers crossed except the mother, who alone believes her son can save the country?

The next scene is the patriot in his regalia, which no longer means a frock coat or a misnamed overcoat substituting therefor, and lo, here he is, at the western gate of the White House, now that it is open once more. He slows up, squirms in his coat to make it fit better, looks furtively but all around him to see who is looking, and approaches the first step like a man with something on his mind. To the bride and groom—or brides and grooms on the rubberneck trucks, he is pointed out as one of the statesmen, and looking toward his retreating silhouette it isn't hard to believe it.

The fact that the real man with business at the White House drives through the gates or hoofs it by the side gate on Executive avenue is nothing in the young life of any guide. Besides, every other man in Washington is a statesman, although no one has so far catalogued the state he is from or in—more especially in.

The patriot coughs, rubs a sole on the step as though he were annoyed by some chewing gum adhering on it, which is not so at all, and merely is an operation that wears out expensive shoes so much sooner, but the only nearly hospitable sign is when one of three officers in charge half-way meets him. They have bland smiles, these uniformed sufferers, but they have more eyes than Argus, and they meet the patriot to restrain him from producing from somewhere a sheaf of papers, memorandum books, a diploma or two, because if these patriots ever get a real chance to unfold their correspondence and other exhibits, from A to Z and from AAA to ZZZ, it would be all over.

It is obvious that it is taken for granted he is a great man, because so far no one wants to examine the testimonials and lodge pictures and the mayor's rubber stamp letter thanking him for having removed the decaying fence from his backyard. So he takes a deep breath and holds on to as much of the poor ozone inhaled there—three-fourths of it is hot air—and thus rotund in chest measurement hies himself toward the rear.

Gets the Once Over

HE SEES a few persons idling about, some silent as statues, a few sitting upright, stiffly, the only kind of ladies and gents-in-waiting of the President by the way, and others laughing, talking, whispering, hatted and unhatted, so that the patriot hardly knows if he is in the midst of his future official peers or of his future menials.

He looks again; and he sees a handsome gentleman who looks his way indifferently, and he—the patriot—nods with a sickly smile. But lo—light of lights—he remembers the fellow; of course, hadn't he seen him in the movie weekly riding with the President? But this gentleman—of which there are several but of whom no other description should be herein made than to say that they are handsome, which is truth—has optically photographed the stranger, classified him as country-saver MX-39, and is off. He should worry! Which proves in this instance that it is better to be the man outside than inside.

Well, good old Pat, for whom a special cloud has been selected in paradise—though here is hoping his tenancy is away off—goes through his ordeal—and he, too, hastens to restrain the patriot that his papers are all right. All he wants is to find out if Congressman S. And Soh has "made an appointment for him?"

Well, not exactly, but here's a letter. It calls upon the organized and unionized White House staff, from one end to the other, to do all they can to facilitate the mission of his valued constituent, who had the pleasure in November to cast his vote for the man within.

Right here and now is where the patriot may get his,

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